GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:986
ANSWERED ON:25.11.2002
THEFT OF FOREST WEALTH
P.C. THOMAS

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a large-scale forest abuse and destruction / theft of forest wealth has been reported in various parts of the country especially in Kerala during the last three years;

(b) if so, the details thereof, State-wise; and

(c) the details of action taken in each of the case particularly of Idukki district in Kerala alongwith the present status thereof?

Answer

MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU)

(a) to (c) No specific instances of large scale Forest abuse and destruction / theft of forest wealth have come to the notice of the Central Government in the country including Kerala except those of North-Eastern States and some parts of Kerala. In case of North Eastern States, the Central Government had received information about large scale movement of illegal timber through railways. Physical verification of about 200 wagons was got done by the Central Government during which all the wagons were found to contain substantial quantity of illegal timber. In exercise of the powers conferred on the Central Government by the Supreme Court by its order dated 13.11.2000 in writ petition no. 202/95, a Special Investigation Team (SIT) has been constituted for carrying out investigations and further follow up action. After investigations, illegal timber contained in these wagons has been confiscated. Licenses of the concerned wood based industries have been suspended. In Wayanad district of Kerala, felling of 431 trees was noticed during January, 2000 for which a case was registered against culprits after seizing the felled timber. The seized timber has been auctioned. The delinquent officers, found prima-facie involved in the scandal, were placed under suspension. A Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) enquiry has also been ordered by the High Court of Kerala. In the Idukki districts of Kerala, which was under the dual control of the Revenue and Forest Departments, some encroachers occupied about 800 ha. of land. The entire area has now been brought under the control of Forest Department to ward off any further encroachments. Disciplinary action has been initiated against erring officials of Revenue and Forest Departments. Isolated cases of theft, smuggling, encroachment etc do take place resulting in destruction of forest wealth. All such cases are dealt with under various Acts and Rules in-force in the respective States.